FOLLOW-UP REPORT
April 2004

The following report is provided to the Transportation Asset Management Council as you discuss the data collection effort for 2004. It is divided into 7 sections:

1. Training
2. Process
3. Ratings
4. Equipment
5. Scheduling
6. Partnership
7. Miscellaneous Comments

During the months of February and March, staff conducted follow-up meetings in Escanaba, Gaylord, Traverse City, Flint, Detroit, Grand Rapids, and Kalamazoo. The meetings were held to receive direct feedback from those who participated in the 2003 data collection effort. There were 105 in total attendance.

In addition, several agencies did follow-up activities on their own. The results of their surveys are included in this report.

The report represents a synopsis of the follow-up comments received. The actual surveys and statements are on file and available for your review if you would like to see them.

Training

➤ Information presented was very useful and helpful for evaluation.
➤ PASER explanation by MDOT was cursory at best. Suggest more in-depth training be provided for those not already familiar with PASER separate from regional meeting. Regional meetings should focus on procedure, schedule, and broad concepts.
➤ Let LTAP handle the training. Put money into regional budgets for LTAP to do training.
➤ Training was adequate although using the computer was the only way to get familiar with the program. We conducted a "dry run" a few days before the start of the inventory.
➤ More training is needed on RoadSoft to get used to the function keys.
➤ A full day of training is not necessary.
➤ Following the training our area also did a ½ day training on the road that was helpful.
➤ Training was good.
➤ I don't think the training was really all that helpful. The PASER rating system is not rocket science and after about 5 miles I found my thoughts matching those of my experienced colleagues.

- Fair. Should be held in a computing center for hands on training.
- Training was OK. More financial training would be helpful.
- Training was enough to help you understand the process and the goal. It did not really help in the road rating skills.
- Have training throughout the year; maybe at the TSCs [MDOT Transportation Service Centers]
- Training was sufficient
- In-house training was excellent; in-car would be beneficial.
- Should be some training in pavement management philosophy.
- Need more hands on use of computer.
- MDOT person in Upper Peninsula was not adequately trained. Always one or two points too high; wouldn't take time to look closely at the road; too much arguing.
- Have the LTAP do the training; have them ride in the vehicle.
- The workshop prepared us very well for the data collection task.
- Training on mapping features in RoadSoft would have been useful prior to the start of the data collection.
- Need more training on the laptop data collector and less on PASER. The more familiar one is with the toggle keys the easier the GPS operations.
- Make sure that everyone in the vehicle has been trained.
- I would suggest additional guidance on preparing summary reports in RoadSoft, how to extract the rating data from RoadSoft into your own GIS, other applications of the GPS and laptop data collector, and incorporating the ratings into your own pavement management system.

Process

- In retrospect, we went to fast in some areas.
- MDOT field representative should be a local TSC or region staff person. Someone with experience in pavement preservation and familiar with the state roads being rated.
- Some found that having each member of the team continue doing the same activity (drive, rate, enter data) they became more efficient. Others preferred switching.
- Flipping through the manuals in the vehicle was cumbersome.
- We had no instances where we did not quickly agree on a road rating. In our experience, concern over divergent, contentious ratings and/or bias towards one's own roads was unfounded.
- I think a two-person crew would do a valid job just as accurately and efficiently with some advance navigation and route planning.
- Too many stops due to too many segments.
- Some roads were rated without having been driven. These were roads where a recent overlay or sealcoat had just been done.

- One region sent maps to the TSCs in their area for verification; especially regarding surface type. Many segments were changed based on these reviews.
- Went too fast; one county was done in 3 hours. A common remark was "We have to get this done because I have to be someplace else tomorrow.
- Need to collect more than just surface rating; shoulders, base, and drainage.
- Bring the TSCs into the process.
- Use MDOT TSC personnel or someone with pavement management experience.
- Emphasis was on getting it done too fast, rather than accuracy. Marquette CRC: "Not a good use of my time."
- On one occasion (Manistee) roads were rated without a county person in the vehicle. The ratings were not done on county roads, only state roads, and this had been pre-arranged with the county person because she had a doctor's appointment and the team didn't want to lose several hours of rating time.
- Combine this effort with HPMS data collection effort.
- Other data should be collected: HPMS, traffic, drainage.
- Need ratings on base, drainage. Lots of data is available at local levels; use it rather than trying to recreate the wheel.
- Collect roughness index at the same time.
- Need to evaluate bridges and culverts.
- Is it absolutely necessary to have 3 people in the vehicle? Sometimes it is difficult to accomplish with a small staff.

Ratings

- The information collected was useful.
- We will be able to use it for our project selections
- It will help in monitoring the condition of our system and identify possible maintenance or reconstruction needs.
- Data collection will be very useful for future mapping and road projects
- To determine how best to utilize limited resources for both preservation and reconstruction projects.
- It will help the board focus on the entire system rather than current hot spots.
- We are providing road condition maps and explanations to individual townships to aid future road improvement priorities.
- People with the most "road" experience were considered correct even when their ratings did not really reflect what the training and the books provided.
- By using the manual there seemed to be a consistency in the ratings.
- It was extremely helpful to compare the historic road commission data with our final results. The ratings appeared to be within one grading of the

historic data in most cases. The real benefit came by being able to adjust/edit our data for road type. In the field if we saw asphalt on the surface we rated the roadway as asphalt. The road commission data allowed us to change these roadways that had concrete under, to the appropriate category [composite].

➢ Had problems with rating sealcoat. Was it sealcoat or asphalt?
➢ Individuals' backgrounds can affect ratings. Design engineers would rate roads differently than maintenance engineers.
➢ MDOT person insisted that a new sealcoat is a 10! [Highest rating you can give a new sealcoat is an 8]
➢ Ratings should be based on the "fix needed" rather than the pictures.
➢ Want to see last year's ratings. Tendency seemed to be to rate too high. If they could see the previous year's rating this may cause them to slow down and look at a segment a bit closer.
➢ Newer raters rate tougher; early in the day tendency to rate tougher.
➢ Sometimes there seems to be a bias against concrete because of ride quality rather than the surface distress.
➢ Seemed to be some difficulty with the 4s and 5s. A four is the first place you begin to see rutting. Raters, especially non-engineers, tended to rate roads where the first signs of rutting were noticed; inclined to rate a 5 rather than 4.
➢ It was my understanding that everyone was trained in the use of PASER. During the rating process, many time I was overruled by the two other raters, in favor of the next higher rating. It was my understanding that we only needed to reach a majority on the rating versus a consensus. Keeping in mind that rutting is the hardest of all the defects to see without actually stopping to measure, in retrospect, I should have stuck to my rating and caused us to stop and take a look.

Equipment

➢ Several vans had occasional problems with light bars.
➢ We were not aware of a patch for the laptop data collector until 2 days before conducting the survey. It would have been nice if all coordinators would have been informed of the patch as soon as it was made available. We called Tech about the error we were having with the laptop and found out about the patch.
➢ Software was a problem. It refused to load on 3 different machines…all for different reasons. In spite of coaching from Tech this problem could not be resolved. The software refused to allow us to import/export using floppy discs.
➢ Software worked well once we became familiar with the shortcut key stroke combinations.
➢ We suggest an optional audible signal when changing segments and ability to simply toggle additional geographic features (e.g. lakes,

railroads, rivers) on/off on GIS display to assist in "getting our bearings" especially in rural areas.

➢ Laptop gets hot and you need some type of tray or platform to set it on. A mouse is also essential.

➢ Need an audible signal when you go to the next segment. Like ability to turn it off and on.

➢ Need a continuous power source in vehicle. [This was only a problem in one vehicle]

➢ Dynamic segmentation is a major issue: Too many segments in framework; local agencies split them even further for safety analyses.

➢ Use Framework segmentation rather than RoadSoft; problems with seeming and segmentation; everyone should be using the same thing.

➢ Continue to use RoadSoft; don't use another program.

➢ There is a problem with the Framework and the abundance of tiny segments. Each segment has to be rated. This tends to slow down the process.

➢ When we had to restart the computer we had to reset the GPS every time.

➢ Another major issue was the different computer systems that each road commission was using. Some older systems took over 1 hour just to retrieve the information that should have taken under 5 minutes. We purchased a key card that we used to transfer data instead of floppy discs or CD ROMs. The only issue is that the key cards don't work with Windows 98.

➢ The GPS "freezes" quite frequently and it has to be disconnected and then reconnected. This can be a problem in developed areas with small block segments.

➢ There continues to be a struggle to keep the laptop cool.

➢ How do we get observed changes into the Framework?

Scheduling

➢ Appreciated the willingness to accommodate our scheduling request.

➢ We would have like more notice of when the MDOT person was to be in our area. We only had a few day's notice.

➢ Scheduling activity on short notice around the availability of the MDOT person and vehicle, made agency scheduling somewhat difficult.

➢ Spread out the data collection to the spring/summer. One month for 3 counties is too time consuming for staffs.

➢ We were a bit surprised and disappointed that we were not told more in advance that our collection would start 3 business days after the training.

➢ Would like some flexibility in scheduling.

➢ We had a very short notice; only one or two days.

➢ Need some flexibility in scheduling. MDOT contract people had to factor in travel time. They could only work 40 hours per week and travel was counted in this total.

- Need more flexibility in scheduling.
- Not enough advance notice.

Partnership

- NEMCOG respondents indicated the cooperative effort and team interaction was the best thing about the process.
- I have appreciated the teamwork and spirit of cooperation among those involved in this effort.
- The state has done a wonderful job of being available for questions and generally making us feel like a vital partner in the success of the project.
- Good camaraderie! Liked their team. Worked well together.
- MDOT person was argumentative and unsafe driver; had to be relieved after 20 minutes.

Miscellaneous

- How often should this be done?
  - Every other year
  - No more than every other year
  - Every other year
  - Collect for at least 3 consecutive years; after that once every 3 years
  - Once every 3 years
  - Rate every year
  - Every year might be too often
  - Rate every other year
- Use a per diem for daily meal allowances
- In the off year the data base could be reviewed and verified, expanding (i.e., adding traffic data such as AADT and % commercial/heavy traffic), and utilized within MPO's long range planning process.
- The funding reimbursement process is cumbersome.
- One county road commission person thought that "asset management was a joke". He only has enough funds to do worst first.
- Agencies are interested in moving ahead. But they will wait until the Council makes its decisions before they commit resources.
- LTAP students/interns in regions for the summer; assist in doing local ratings, culverts, etc.
- LTAP should be responsible for the data and not the planning agencies.